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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002452

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2025

TAGS: PREL PGOV PAID PINS SY LE EU I2 UN

SUBJECT: MFA ZEBARI DISCUSSES SYRIA, IRAQ CONFERENCE, AND THE U.S. ROLE IN THE CONSTITUTION PROCESS

REF: A. SECSTATE 105225

1B. BAGHDAD 2427

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION CABLE. SEE PARAGRAPH 10.

SYRIAN DEMARCHE POINTS DELIVERED

¶12. (C) On June 8, DCM conveyed REFTEL A demarche points regarding Syrian participation at EU - U.S. Brussels Conference to Minister of Foreign Affairs Zebari. Zebari said the ITG was in agreement with the U.S. proposed strategy on how to manage Syria and had already laid the necessary groundwork in a recent meeting with the EU. Zebari also offered that he was not worried about Syrian misbehavior at the upcoming Brussels Conference and predicted Syria would not cause any problems.

SYRIA WILL CONTINUE TO PRESENT CHALLENGES

¶13. (C) Discussing recent events in Syria, Zebari opined that even the governmental changes announced at the recently held Ba'ath Party Congress would have little or no impact on Syria's approach to international affairs. They are set in their ways and will not open their system to change said Zebari. Zebari said the Syrians approached the ITG a number of times already, but the Iraqis have rejected these overtures because the Syrians will give "very, very little" in return for our cooperation.

¶14. (C) DCM emphasized that Iraq has a great deal of leverage with Syria at the moment because of its internal problems and that this leverage should be used to help force the release of Iraqi assets held in Syria and to demand that Syria close its border with Iraq to insurgents. Zebari concurred with DCM's sense that it would be impossible to close the borders without Syrian cooperation.

ZEBARI SEES NEED FOR A MORE ACTIVE U.S. ROLE

¶15. (C) Asked to clarify his recent statements in Washington regarding the need for more U.S. engagement in Iraqi governmental affairs, Zebari stated that the U.S. had swung between two extremes during the last two years and the next few months called for a more involved posture by the U.S. The U.S. must engage the political leadership in a pro-active manner during the run up to the August 15 constitution drafting deadline said Zebari or risk having the process delayed and the insurgency take control. "UNSCR 1546 authorizes the U.S. to take this role," said Zebari, "and we ask for your help during this critical period."

¶16. (C) DCM emphasized that the U.S. is already highly engaged with Iraq's political leadership on this vital issue and that the U.S. will continue to do all it can to help the ITG meet the August 15 drafting deadline.

INTERNAL GOVERNMENT RIFT

¶17. (C) Discussing the governance issues detailed in REF B, Zebari stated that Prime Minister Jafari was not abiding by the formal agreement reached between the Kurds and List 169 during the ITG's formation and that he hoped that the matter could be resolved constructively. Zebari suggested that Talabani's memorandum addressing the issue should not be presented to Jafari but only used to guide the discussion because it would only cause increased resistance to a settlement by Jafari. There are many important issues this government must address stated Zebari and this issue is standing in the way of helping the Iraqi people with their problems.

JUNE 21 - 22 BRUSSELS CONFERENCE PREPARATIONS

18. (C) DCM stressed the need to speak with a unified voice at the Brussels Conference and to have a persuasive and well-structured set of presentations that would portray Iraq in the most favorable light possible. The DCM also encouraged Zebari to ensure all matters were well coordinated throughout the government, especially with the PM's office. Zebari agreed with the DCM and offered that he had just hosted a planning meeting with all high-level Iraqi participants going to the Conference including the MOD, MOI, MOF, MOJ, MOPDC, MOT, and the Central Bank's President. Zebari stressed that he was very comfortable with how their preparations were coming and that the same group would meet June 13 to again review the status of their progress.

19. (C) The MFA will serve as the lead agency for planning and coordination for the Conference indicated Zebari and revealed that he had also formed a working-level group at the Deputy Minister level to handle the day-to-day planning and preparations for the Conference. Zebari emphasized that Iraq's delegation would be representative of all Iraqis and would include people from both inside and outside the government including representatives from the IIP, KRG and politicians such as Adnan Pacachi.

IRAQI UN ARREARAGES

10. (C) Zebari indicated that Iraq owes the United Nations approximately \$20 million in unpaid dues and requested our assistance in determining whether this debt could be paid from Iraq's escrow account. BEGIN ACTION REQUEST: We would appreciate Department and USUN guidance on response to Zebari regarding legality of Iraqi use of escrow funds to pay its U.N. arrearages. END ACTION REQUEST.

11. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.
Jeffrey